



Behavioral VA Health Care Line NEWS

1st Quarter 2001

Intranet: <http://vaww.visn2.med.va.gov/bh>
Internet: <http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/bh>

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, articles for inclusion, or would like to be a Guest Writer or Reporter from your site for this newsletter, please contact Sheila Harris (716) 393-7422 or Allen Chopik (716) 393-7240 at Canandaigua.



February 19, 2001

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Hello from Dr. Scott Murray

Director, Behavioral VA Health Care Line

This letter finds the VISN 2 sites celebrating the excellent results of their hospital accreditation reviews. There was much staff energy around ensuring all was in place for a great review. We have a long history of success, and this year reflected the improvements we have made at all of the sites. Ultimately, the goal is to provide the best service for the veterans we serve. That means not just better quality, but better access, quicker response time and higher satisfaction.



Data from this past year show we have improved in all these areas. We are now one of the best veteran networks in the country at meeting the needs of veterans. This does not mean we can stop improving; there is much more to do. Behavioral health care providers are now members of the primary care teams at all Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and medical center clinics. The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) is now a regular screening that all patients complete at least once a year to let the providers know how stress or other emotional factors may be affecting their health. At last, the world is recognizing that physical and emotional health go together. We cannot really have one without the other.

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WHO ARE WE?

NETWORK BH CARE LINE MANAGEMENT

Dr. Scott Murray, *Director, BVAHCL*
Phone: 518-462-3311 x3482
Marylou Buxton, *Secretary*
Phone: 518-462-3311, x3481
Ro Hurley, *Chief Operating Officer*
Phone: 518-462-3311, x3483
Doug Erickson, *Health Systems Spec.*
Phone: 518-462-3311, x3361
Dr. Mary Schohn, *Clinical Coordinator*
Phone: 716-862-8590

LOCAL BH CARE LINE MANAGEMENT Albany

Linda Kelly, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 518-462-3311 x3302
Dr. Bruce Nelson, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 518-462-3311, x3411
Sue Melnikoff, *Administrative Officer*
Phone: 518-462-3311, x3303
Paul Comerford, *Secretary*
Phone: 518-462-3311, x3301

Bath

Freida Wheeler, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 607-664-4337
Sharon McKinley, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 607-664-4314
Karen DeVolder, *Administrative Officer*
Phone: 607-664-4312
Denise Walters, *Secretary*
Phone: 607-664-4313

Buffalo

Dr. John Gillick, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 716-862-8595
Harold Rybak, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 716-862-8592
Elizabeth Kolby, *Administrative Officer*
Phone: 716-862-8574
Margaret Estes, *Secretary*
Phone: 716-862-8595
Joanne Hayes, *Secretary (Batavia)*
Phone: 716-343-7500, x7513

Canandaigua

Sherry Sacco, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 716-393-7245
Dr. Shirish Patel, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 716-393-7246
Allen Chopik, *Administrative Officer*
Phone: 716-393-7240
Mona Whelan, *Secretary*
Phone: 716-393-7242

Syracuse

Dr. Larry Lantinga, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 315-476-7461, x3987
Dr. William Hardoby, *BH Care Line Manager*
Phone: 315-476-7461, x3412
Glen Gardner, *Administrative Officer*
Phone: 315-476-7461, x3633
Carol Llados, *Secretary*
Phone: 315-476-7461, x3128

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Hello from Dr. Scott Murray

The GHQ just tells the provider if you are under some stress that may require some further discussion or assessment. Studies have found it greatly improves the ability of your doctor to know when something may need attention. It can even be something that you may not even initially recognize is a problem, for which there is help. In addition, we are installing TV cameras so that a patient at many of our CBOCs can talk to a psychiatrist at a medical center. This new way of

seeing a provider is called telepsychiatry. It saves the patient the trip to a hospital and gets the patient the care he or she needs quickly (and you get to be on TV! See page 5 to learn more about Telepsychiatry.) Again, studies show all this dramatically improves care and satisfaction among the patients who have seen their psychiatrist in this way. If you have any questions related to any of the things that I have discussed in this article, please contact your local Behavioral Health Care staff at the site closest to you.



Correction

In the 4th Quarter 2000 issue of the Behavior VA Health Care Line News the Plattsburgh/Malone clinic was incorrectly listed as Plattsburgh/Monroe. We apologize for the error.

Telepsychiatry Arrives in Network 2

Written by Larry J. Lantinga, Ph.D.

Co-Care Line Manager, BVAHCL

Syracuse VAMC

The Behavioral VA Health Care Line (BVAHCL) has begun using telemedicine technology to improve access to psychiatric services in Network 2. Known as telepsychiatry, the program began over a year ago with services at the Syracuse VAMC. The Albany VAMC came on-line in the Fall of 2000, and soon all Network 2 facilities will have telepsychiatry capabilities.

What is telepsychiatry? In general, telemedicine is the use of electronic information and communications technologies to provide and support health care when distance separates the participants. Telepsychiatry or telemental health as it is also called, uses videoconferencing technology to link a provider in one facility, e.g., the Syracuse VAMC, with a patient located in another facility, such as the Watertown Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). The equipment provides television-quality pictures and

sound for participants at both ends of the conference.

The benefits of telepsychiatry are obvious to those veterans who live in remote areas of Network and who would otherwise have to

Our patients who have participated in medical management services via telepsychiatry have been unanimous in their acceptance of the new program.

spend hours traveling to the nearest VA Medical Center. Instead they now will be able to drive to the nearest CBOC and meet with their behavioral health provider via telepsychiatry.

The initial use of telepsychiatry in Network 2 began with psychiatrists providing medication evaluations. Dr. Robert Kotz, Staff Psychiatrist at the Syracuse VAMC has had the most experience using telepsychiatry. He says that he has become very

comfortable with the new technology. Our patients who have participated in medical management services via telepsychiatry have been unanimous in their acceptance of the new program.

When the system is fully implemented there will be telepsychiatry connectivity among all five medical centers, the Batavia campus and at more than 12 of our CBOCs, including the Rochester Outpatient Clinic. In addition, other BVAHCL providers will soon be using the system to provide other types of behavioral care services such as QuitSmart® and substance abuse evaluations.



Network Stand Downs Serve 950 Veterans

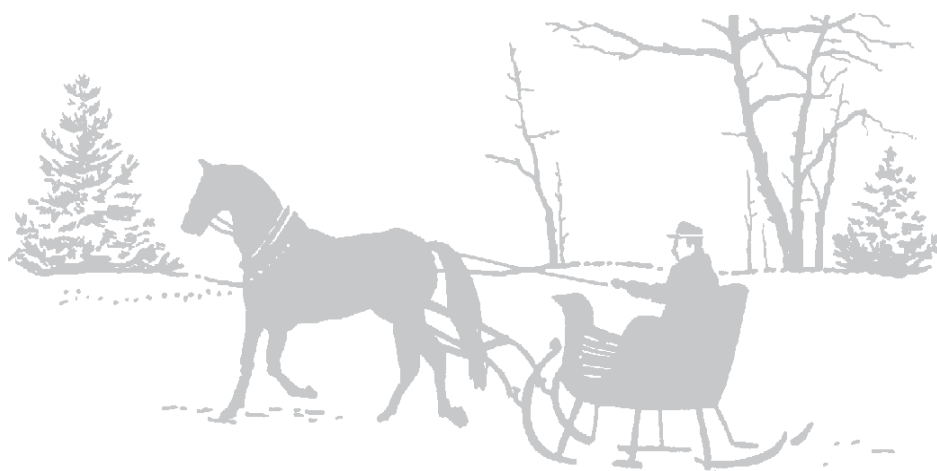
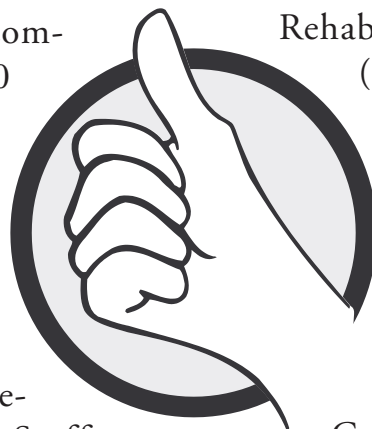
*Robert Van Keuren,
Network Homeless
Coordinator*

The Network 2 Health Care for Homeless Veterans Programs held 6 homeless veterans Stand Downs this past year that served approximately 950 veterans. Stand Downs were held in Rennsalaer, Buffalo, Syracuse, Plattsburgh, Rochester, and Troy. Veterans were provided with free clothing, food, medical care, veterans benefits information, employment assistance, and eye care. There were a total of 278 veterans who were not previously enrolled in VA health care who were screened for VA eligibility. A total of 3,680 meals were served, and over 100 local agencies provided services to those in attendance.

Congratulations and Thank You!!

Congratulations to all Behavioral Health Staff across the VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York for successfully completing the 2000 JCAHO Surveys and your first CARF Surveys! During the months of October, November and December Behavioral Health Staff throughout Network 2 were busily preparing for and undergoing accreditation surveys with both the Joint

Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). The results of these surveys clearly demonstrate the high quality programs that are offered in the Behavioral Health Care Line. Thank you for all of your efforts and the compassionate care you provide to the veterans we serve.



Behavioral VA Health Care Line's Implementation of the High Performance Development Model

Bruce Nelson, Ph.D., Co-Care Line Manager,
Behavioral VA Health Care Line, Albany VA Medical Center

The Department of Veterans Affairs has developed a nation-wide program entitled the *High Performance Development Model* (HPDM). The program was designed to support the VA's effort in becoming an "employer of choice" in a highly competitive and rapidly changing health care industry. A main goal of the program is to assist employees in developing the work skills they will need in the future. In addition, the program is designed to make our services more customer-friendly.

Network 2's Behavioral VA Health Care Line has been actively implementing the six key components of the program in all of its facilities during this past year, from Albany to Buffalo. The six components of HPDM are:

- *Performance-based Interviewing*
- *Core Competencies*
- *Continuous Assessment*
- *Continuous Learning*
- *Coaching and Mentoring*
- *Performance Management*

Each of the six key components will significantly contribute to the future success of the organization. Each component is described below.

1. It is every organization's goal to hire the most qualified candidates. The VA has now implemented a *performance-based interviewing* process to aid in our selection process. This particular interviewing method requires candidates to demonstrate competency in the various duties that they will be asked to do should the VA hire them.

2. This past year, all care line employees were required to learn the eight *core competencies*. These basic work skills and attitudes were identified as necessary to successfully participate in the VA's mission. For example, each employee is being challenged to develop their technical skills, to provide the highest level of customer service, and to improve their interpersonal effectiveness.

3. It is our desire to have all employees engage in a *continuous assessment* of their current strengths and weaknesses, and identify educational needs.

4. Furthermore, funding is available to help employees take

advantage of educational programming as it relates to their jobs. The funding promotes the HPDM goal of *continuous learning opportunities*.

5. On the supervisory end of the program, the VA philosophy has shifted from one of mandating and ordering its employees to one of *coaching and mentoring* them.

6. By offering creative solutions to the work environment, such as supporting different job rotations and changes in team assignments, employees can develop a sense of control over their careers with the VA. By using this kind of *performance management* approach, a new kind of work environment can be created, one that employees find rewarding. For more information on the HPDM, be sure to visit the Network 2 HPDM web site at:

<http://vaww.visn2.med.va.gov/emp/career.html>.

Core Competencies

- Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Customer Service
- Systems Thinking
- Flexibility/Adaptability
- Creative Thinking
- Organizational Stewardship
- Personal Mastery
- Technical Competency

Behavioral VA Health Care Line Welcomes Kevin O'Hagan



Kevin O'Hagan has recently been appointed as the Coordinator of Vocational Services for Network 2 Behavioral Health Care Line. Prior to his appointment, Kevin served as a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist at the Canandaigua VA. Kevin holds a Master's Degree in Vocational Rehabilitation from the University of Wisconsin-Stout. He is a nationally Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) as well as a New York State Certified Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC).

While Kevin recently started working in his new position, he has been an active member of the Vocational Services Group and has had the opportunity to work with many of the Vocational Specialists throughout the Network. Kevin shares the thoughts that our vocational programming efforts are among the best in the VA system.

Please take the opportunity to share comments or suggestions with Kevin regarding Vocational Services. Kevin may be reached at the Canandaigua VA at 716-393-7732.

Kevin's goals for the upcoming year are:

- ◆ To develop a continuum of care for vocational services programming throughout the network to provide consistency for veterans accessing our network.
- ◆ To develop an Internet web site that will enable veterans and employers to submit and review resumes for potential employment positions.
- ◆ To assist in the continued development of community-based employment positions as well as the expansion of the JAVA coffee project.
- ◆ To publicize the efforts and the results of the various vocational programs to inform the community about the successes of veterans programming.

Reaching Us Is Easy

VA Healthcare On The Web

<http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/>

You'll find more than 1500 pages designed to make it easy for veterans to access accurate, up-to-date information about VA healthcare. You'll also find specific information on VA Women Veterans Health Services.

Upstate New York Veterans ~

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